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And in *Wind and Lyre*, perhaps the finest of his lyrics, Mr. Markham gives us an impassioned and beautiful prayer-song:

Thou art the wind and I the lyre:
Strike, O Wind, on the sleeping strings—
Strike till the dead heart stirs and sings!
I am the altar and thou the fire:
Burn, O Fire, to a snowy flame—
Burn me clean of the mortal blame!

I am the night and thou the dream:
Touch me softly and thrill me deep,
When all is white on the hills of sleep.
Thou art the moon and I the stream:
Shine to the trembling heart of me,
Light my soul to the mother-sea.

H. M.

The Poet in the Desert, by Charles Erskine Scott Wood.

Privately printed: Portland, Oregon.

Mr. Wood's special distinction is that he really "enters into the desert," that his poetry really presents something of the color and glory, the desolation and tragedy, of this wonderland at our western gates. Thus the best of this poem is its *Prologue*, which is a desert rhapsody, rather than its fifteen-hundred lines, more or less, of dialogue between the Poet and Truth.

I do not mean that such an arraignment of present-day injustices, and such ardor for true social democracy, is beyond the range of poetic art, but merely that this poet's mind as yet mingles too much propaganda with its motive. Like Mr. Markham, he is in danger of alienating his muse by becoming an exhorter for social righteousness. To be sure there

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are many fine lines, and passages of true poetry, mingled with the splendid and glowing eloquence of the dialogue. Its motive is big, and of a high nobility:

I have pushed aside the curtains of the universe
And looked in; and there,
In a desolation never to be broken,
Brooded my soul, in a great loneliness.
I said to myself, "I will carve godhood
"Out of manhood;

"Joy and Beauty are the breath of Creation," and all life is to be fulfilled in them:

I know that the slow-moving streams
Which press through the streets of the cities
Ought to sing their cantata of joy,
As well as the brooks which warble past
The knees of the great fir trees.

And toward that fulfilment of joy the crowds are marching:

They are not going down into the pits.
They are not marching to the factories.
They are not going to the furnaces.
Nearer, more near; stronger; louder; more strong;
They come, and the mutter of their lips is
"Revolution. Revolution. Revolution."

To a man thus afire for a cause, poetry, or the lack of it, in his message may seem a matter of minor importance. But it should be his immediate concern, for the poetry of his message is its life, and Mr. Wood proves himself a poet not only by the sweep and power of his vision, but by the rich imagery and rhythmic beauty of his free verse at its best. On almost every page one finds fine lines, like this, of Nature:

She holds the suns lightly between her fingers.

Or these:

I shod my spirit with the winged slippers of the wind.

The pools of evening
Wherein the stars dance, and along the border of which runs the
liquid moon.

Also these lines to Truth:

Your face is pale, like the earliest dawn, before the birds have
awakened.

Your feet are like lilies by the rim of a pool,
And your wings the mist of a cataract wherein the sun plays,
Making a delicate glory; fleeting; iridescent.

But in the *Prologue* no ardor for a Cause gets between
the poet and his muse. Therefore, knowing and loving the
desert, he gives us something of its varied magnificence in
vivid passages of more sustained poetic beauty. His song
of praise is a chant which needs amplitude; we can hardly
do justice to its impassioned beauty by brief extracts.

Never have I found a place, or a season, without beauty.
Neither the sea, where the white stallions champ their bits and
rear against their bridles,

Nor the Desert, bride of the Sun, which sits scornful, apart,
Like an unwooded Princess, careless; indifferent.

She spreads her garments, wonderful beyond estimation,
And embroiders continually her mantle.

She is a queen, seated on a throne of gold
In the Hall of Silence.

She insists upon meditation.

She insists that the soul be free.

She requires an answer.

She demands the final reply to thoughts which cannot be an-
swered.

She lights the Sun for a torch
And sets up the great cliffs as sentinels.

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The morning and the evening are curtains before her chambers.
She displays the stars as her coronet.

The poet is as sensitive to the desert's delicacy as to its
majesty. He feels the incredible pathos of

The little delicate flowers of the desert,
Which . . . catch at the hem of Spring, and are gone.

The flowers bloom in the Desert joyously.
They do not weary themselves with questioning;
They are careless whether they be seen or praised.
They blossom unto life perfectly and unto death perfectly, leaving
nothing unsaid.
They spread a voluptuous carpet for the feet of the Wind
And to the frolic breezes which overleap them, they whisper:
"Stay a moment, brother; plunder us of our passion;
Our day is short, but our beauty is eternal."

Perhaps this is enough to prove that the Far West has
produced a poet who, though somewhat over-burdened with
his message, is capable of rapture; a poet of large vision, of
profound sympathy and faith, whose free verse sometimes
attains orchestral richness. *H. M.*